SHRI SURINDER KUMAR SINGLA: What are the problems that the Minister has faced in reaching the PDS to poor people and what malpractices is he really going to eliminate? He said that there is a lot of vested interests in really making the PDS reach to poor people.

SHRI BUTA SINGH: Sir,we have come to know through the consumer fora from various parts of the country about the mal-practices that have been indulged in by some of the shops. The main problem is that the State Governments have to tighten the machinery and make the fair price shop system adequate to meet the requirements of local population. So, that is where the bottleneck has come.

Reducing prices of consumer items under RPDS

*462. SHRIMATI VEENA VERMA:

†SHRI SUSHILKUMAR SAMBHAJIRAO SHINDE:

Will the Minister of CIVIL SUPPLIES, CONSUMER AFFAIRS AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government have had under consideration the question of further reducing the sale price of consumer items under the Revamped Public Distribution System and to include more essential items like pulses, edible oils, tea and soaps under the RPDS, and

(b) whether there is also a proposal to extend RPDS to 500 backward blocks, if so, the criteria to be applied for identification of such blocks?

THE MINISTER OF CIVIL SUPPLIES CONSUMER AFFAIRS AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION (SHRI BUTA SINGH): (a) and (b) A statement is laid on the Table of the House.

Statement

(a) The Central Government makes bulk allocation of only rice, wheat, levy sugar, superior kerosene oil,, imported edible oil and soft coke to States|UTs for the Public Distribution System (PDS) including the areas covered under the Revamped Public Distribution System (RPDS). State Government/UT Administrations have been advised to and additional items of mass consumption for distribution in PDS and RPDS areas according to local needs and consumer preferences. Many State Government|UT Administrations have reported that they are distributing additional items such as pulses, soaps iodised salt and tea through Fair Price Shops. Suggestions|requests are made by State Governments|UT Administrations and Central Ministries regarding the reduction of Central Issue Prices of foodgrains for the PDS/RPDS from time to time. Government has not reduced the Central Issue Price of foodgrains meant for distribution in the RPDS areas as these are already being issued at specially subsidised Central Issue Prices.

(b) Yes, Sir. A proposal to extend RPDS to all the additional blocks identified for implementation of the Employment Assurance Scheme is under consideration.

SHRIMATI VEENA VERMA: Sir, the programme of action of the Revamped Public Distribution System includes elimination of private transport of essential commodities to PDS fair price shops by making direct supply to fair price shops and to eliminate the bogus units and ration cards. I would like to know how far the leakage of essential items under PDS has been eliminated and how many bogus units and ration cards registered under RPDS have been cancelled during this period, since January, 1992 when this Scheme was launched. I would also like to know how many genuine RPDS consumers are lift and how many are being catered under the RPDS and how many of them are in tribal areas, especially in Madhya Pradesh. How many blocks had been included in the Revamped Public Distribution System in Madhya Pradesh in the year 1994?

SHRI BUTA SINGH: As I said earlier, out of a total 5,196 blocks in the country, 1,775 blocks are covered under the

†The Question was actually asked in the floor of the House, by Shrimati Veena Verma.

RPDS. The Government has a proposal before it under the RPDS. The Government which in the next two-three months we will be having 2,400 blocks covered under the RPDS. Now, roughly I can give you the number of blocks in Madhya Pradesh. The additional blocks that are likely to be covered in Madhya Pradesh are 1,704 and already opened are 1,276. The number of eliminated bogus cards in Madhya Pradesh is 73,758.

SHRIMATI VEENA VERMA: Sir, may I know whether there is any variation in the sale price of foodgrains and other essential commodities issued through the RPDS fair price shops and those issued through the mobile distribution and whether, in view of rising prices of items under PDS over the period since this scheme was launched by the Government, they have received any request from the State Governments or Union Territory Administrations to increase the special subsidy of Rs. 50/- per quintal on foodgrains. Sir, I would like to know whether the newly-formed State Governments have requested the Union Government for additional subsidy or aid to enable them to finance the special subsidisation scheme for consumer items, and, if so, the details thereof.

SHRI BUTA SINGH: Sir, most of the mobile units which are operating are confined to the RPDS areas because it is there where we require the mobile system. They are difficult terrains, tribal belts, hilly areas, desert-prone areas. Therefore, the Revamped Public Distribution System is provided with the additional help of mobile units. Price variation in the RPDS is Rs. 50 per quintal. Subsidy is given in addition to whatever is available to the PDS. The price variation is 25 per cent of the central issue price per unit in the RPDS. It is a fact that now this variation is also coming down and we are making efforts to see that the RPDS gets back to 25 per cent of the Central issue price.

श्री सुशील कुमार संभाजीराव शिंदे : महोदय, अभी-अभी जो सार्वजनिक चुनाव हुए हैं राज्यों में, उसमें कई राज्यों ने पॉलिटिकल एन ऊसमेंट कर दी कि वे 2.00 रुपए किलो चावल देंगे, 1.75 रुपए किलो गेहूं देंगे और पी०डी० एस० और आर० पी० डी० एस० के तहत यह देंगे, एसा उन्होंने कहा था। तो यह अभी कितना दे पा रहे हैं, इसका तो पता नहीं होगा लेकिन एक बात तो जरूर पता होगी मंत्री महोदय को और सरकार को कि वे ये सरकारें बार-बार भारत सरकार पर दबाव डाल रही है कि यह हमने घोषणा तो कि, चुनकर तो आ गए लेकिन हमारे पास देने के लिए पैसा नहीं है और अनाज नहीं है तथा भारत सरकार उसके लिए सब्सिडी दे दे, इस प्रकार का दबाव वे डाल रहे हैं। तो इस दबाव में भारत सरकार कितना दब गई है ... (व्यवधान)

डा० मुरली मनोहर जोशी : अमेरिका के दबाव से कितना कम है ?

श्री सुबोधप्रिय गौतम : अमेरिका के दबाव से ज्यादा नहीं है।

श्री सुशील कुमार संभाजीराव शिंदे : अभी उससे आगे पूछता हूं, सभापति जी, कि महाराष्ट्र में भारतीय जनता पार्टी और शिव सेना नेशनल-भाकर देने का शुरूविया है। ....(व्यवधान)....

एक माननीय सदस्य : क्या ?

श्री सुशील कुमार संभाजीराव शिंदे : झुणका-भाकर। एक रोटी होती है, उसके नीचे बेसन का आटा बनाया होता है। अध्यक्ष महोदय, आज सुबह-सुबह मैंने आते हुए पढ़ा, एक मैं तो उद्घाटन किया, मंत्री महोदय चले गए और वहां वह दुकान बंद थी। यह आज का है। ..(व्यवधान)...

MR. CHAIRMAN: Please ask the question. It is not a debate... (*Interruptions*)... Please, you do not have to answer it.

श्री सुशील कुमार संभाजीराव शिंदे : कभी-कभी मुझे भारतीय जनता पार्टी को बताना पड़ता है, जब वे अमरीका की बात करते हैं तब उनको घर की बात करके बताना पड़ता है।

सभापति जी, मैं सरकार से यह पूछना चाहता हूं कि ये सरकारें कितना पैसा मांग रही हैं और क्या आप दे सकते हैं और आपके ऊपर कितना दबाव डाल रहे हैं कि आप हमको अनाज में सब्सिडी दे दें या अनाज दे दें, यह हमको सरकार बताए ?

श्री बूटा सिंह : यह जो माननीय सदस्य ने कहा है, बिल्कुल सही है, कि बहुत से तो नहीं, कुछ राज्यों में ऐसा हुआ है। चुनाव से पहले ऐसी घोषणा करके, इसको चुनावी घोषणा ही मानकर ऐसा लोगों को बताया गया और उसके बाद कुछ सरकारों ने ऐसा शुरू भी किया कि उन्होंने बहुत कम दामों पर अनाज देना शुरू किया है—कहीं गेहूं है तो कहीं चावल, इस तरह से यह हो रहा है । मगर यह उन्हीं सरकारों का, जिन्होंने यह घोषणा की है, उन्हीं का प्रयास है और उनको अपने साधनों से ही करना पड़ेगा । भारत सरकार न किसी दबाव के नीचे दबी है और न दबेगी । हां, लोगों के लिए, यदि भारत सरकार के पास एक राष्ट्रीय स्तर पर लोगों के लिए इस प्रकार का कोई प्रस्ताव देश की समूची हालत को देखकर करना हो राष्ट्रीय हित में तो वह राष्ट्रीय सरकार करेगी, मगर किसी चुनाव के लालच से नहीं, वोट ऐंठने के लिए नहीं । अब तक कुछ सरकारों ने ऐसा लिखा है, जिन्होंने यह स्कीम शुरू की है, उन्होंने जनरली लिखा है उन्होंने क्वान्टिटी पैसे की या अनाज की मात्रा हमें नहीं दी है, ऐसी उन्होंने जनरली चिट्ठियां लिखी हैं प्रधान मंत्री को और ऐसा उन्होंने कहा है कि हमने यह शुरू किया है और इसका जो घाटा पड़ने वाला है, वह आप पूरा करें, मगर, उसका हमारा एक ही जवाब है कि हम राष्ट्रीय स्तर पर नीति निर्धारित करते हैं हम राज्यों के लिए और राजनीतिक पार्टियों के लिए राजनीतिक पार्टियों को प्रोत्साहन देने के लिए कोई नीति नहीं बनाते ।

इसलिए जब उन्होंने फैसला किया है तो वे ही अपने साधन देखें ।

श्री चिमनभाई मेहता : महोदय मैं यह पूछना चाहता हूं कि फेयर प्राईस शॉप्स में जो प्राईसेज हैं और गवर्नमेंट आफ इंडिया की तरफ से जो चीजें बांटी जाती हैं, उसमें कोई कमी की जा सकती है या नहीं ? क्योंकि सारे भारत में यह डिमांड तो है ही कि इसमें कटौती हो और आप कटौती नहीं कर पाते । स्टेट गवर्नमेंट प्रोमिस देकर चुनावों में जीत आती हैं वह एक अलग बात है और फिर बाद में वह वायदा पूरा नहीं करते वह भी सही है । अगर आप वायदा पूरा नहीं कर सकते तो हालात देखकर प्राईसेज कम करने के बारे में कुछ सोच सकते हैं या नहीं यह बताएं ?

श्री बूटा सिंह : सभापति जी आप जानते हैं कि वर्तमान बजट में हमारे आदरणीय वित्त मंत्री जी ने जो घोषणा की है उसमें फूड सब्सडी का लेबिल 5250 करोड़ रुपए है । माननीय सदस्यों को फैसला करना है कि इससे अधिक भार क्या हमारी अर्थव्यवस्था ले सकती है ? यदि देश में क्षमता होगी तो हमसे ज्यादा और कौन खुश होगा । इसलिए फूड सब्सडी पहले ही बहुत भारी बोझा है और हम कोशिश कर रहे हैं कि इसको कम किया जाए । फिर भी यद्यपि इस मामले की कोई नीति राष्ट्रीय स्तर पर होनी है तो वह साधन बगैर तो हो नहीं सकेगी, पैसे बगैर हो नहीं सकेगी । ऐसा कोई मौका हो तो इस तरह का राष्ट्रीय स्तर पर सोचा जा सकता है । राज्य सरकारों को अकेले-अकेले करके हम नहीं सोच सकते हैं ।

श्री चिमनभाई मेहता : वह कहते हैं कि सब्सडी हमें कम करना है । आपने कहा कि सब्सडी का बोझा बहुत बढ़ रहा है । क्या सब्सडी का बोझा कम करने के लिए प्राईसेज बढ़ाएंगे ?

श्री बूटा सिंह : यह तो बहुत ही कठिन प्रश्न है । प्राईसेज बढ़ाते हैं तो पी०डी०एस० से उठाता ही नहीं है । इसलिए प्राईसेज बढ़ेंगी तो खरीदेगा कौन ? हमें तो देखना यह है कि जो आम साधारण जनता को एफोर्डेबेल प्राईसेज पर खाद्यान्न मिले । अगर हम कीमत और बढ़ा देते हैं तो इसमें कोई ज्यादा कलाकारी तो नहीं है । कीमत तो आप भी बढ़ा सकते हैं । लेकिन हम तो देखना यह चाहते हैं कि सब देशवासियों को फोर्डेबेल प्राईस पर

अनाज मिले और वह उसको खरीदकर अपने परिवार का पालन कर सकें। इसमें अधिक क्या हो सकता है। यदि माननीय सदस्य कुछ सुझाव लिखकर दें तो हम सोचने के लिए तैयार हैं।

SHRI VIREN J. SHAH: Sir, I want to know whether it is a fact that when the foodgrains and pulses are procured from the farmers a certain percentage of impurity is permitted and it is supposed to be very low. When the same foodgrains are sold at the PDS shos, a much larger percentage of impurity is permitted and with the result of all that, most of the consumers genuinely complain about a lot of impurity in what they get. The real cost of the foodgrains or rationed articles is much higher. Will the hon. Minister kindly enlighten the House as to what the permissible percentage of impurity when the foodgrains, pulses, etc., are purchased or procured from the farmers by the Government agencies and what the permissible orgranted percentage of impurity is in the PDS shops when they are sold to the consumers?

SHRI BUTA SINGH: Sir, procurement is done by the Food Corporation of India. There are specified norms for procuring the foodgrains, specially wheat and rice, their moisture content, quality of grains, cleaning of grains,—all this is given in the mandate that is given to the Food Corporation of India. ... (*Interruptions*)...

SHRI VIREN J. SHAH: I just want to know the percentage of impurity. .. (*Interruptions*). .. There are stones etc. when you purchase and sell. ..... (*Interruptions*). ..

SHRI BUTA SINGH: The Food Corporation of India procures foodgrains from various markets in the country. Sir, pulses are not covered under the procurement system. Pulses, as you know, are already in shortage. Pulses are not covered. .. (*Interruptions*). ...

SHRI VIREN J. SHAH: I want to know only about the foodgrains,... .. (*Interruptions*)...

SHRI BUTA SINGH: You mentioned pulses and foodgrains both, if I heard you right. ... (*Interruptions*). ... So, Sir, foodgrains are procured on the basis of the quality norms fixed by the Food Corporation of India. And then they are transported in bulk to various parts of the country, preserved in stores. The FCI bears the cost of transportation and maintaining them and the issue price is fixed taking into account all that has gone after the procurement price.

SHRI VIREN J. SHAH: I am not asking about the prices. What is the percentage of impurities when you procure wheat?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Are impurities legally allowed?

SHRI VIREN J. SHAH: Impurities are permitted when you procure wheat from Punjab and when the same wheat is sold in Delhi. Let me be very specific. In the PDS, what is the percentage of impurities permitted so that when the consumer goes to the PDS, he may know how much of stones and other impurities are permitted? Am I correct that three per cent is only permitted when you procure foodgrains like wheat in Punjab and 15 per cent impurities is allowed when it is sold in Delhi or anywhere else when it is sold in PDS. Is it correct? If it is not correct what is the correct percentage? I do not want to know the price or anything else.

SHRI BUTA SINGH: Although the question directly does not arise from the present question, I have borrowed an answer from my colleague. I am prepared to share with the hon. House. The figure that the hon. Member has mentioned is not correct. According to the information that I have just now received is, "Schedule showing the maximum permissible limits of different constituents in Fair Average Quality of Wheat. Foreign matters—0.75 per cent, Other foodgrains—5 per cent, Damaged grains including Karnal burnt and areas affected grains—3 per cent. Slightly damaged grains—8 per cent, Shrivelled and broken grains—10 per cent."

SHRI VIREN J. SHAH: 0.75 per cent in the case of wheat in Punjab. What is the percentage of ....

SHRI BUTA SINGH: If the hon. Member wants to have more specific information, I will pass it on.

MR. CHAIRMAN: The Minister says he does not have that information. He will pass it on to you.

SHRI VIREN J. SHAH: In the market, what is the percentage permitted? Why can't you answer? Mr. Civil Supplies Minister, the question is on Public Distribution System. What is the percentage of similar impurities in wheat permitted in Delhi?

SHRI BUTA SINGH: I have noted the contents of the supplementary, I will pass on the information to the hon. Member when I get it from the FCI.

SHRI S. JAIPAL REDDY: Sir, our hon. Minister has stated in all solemnity that political parties are making many promises in regard to subsidised food. Politicians and parties do respond to the felt urge and need of the people. The Congress (I) is also playing the same game. Therefore, it is not as though this is a game that a single party is playing. But I do not blame the political parties because political parties are to respond to the felt urge of the people. The felt urge of the people is, the foodgrains should be made available to them at available rates. So, will the Government of India reconsider the policy of providing more food subsidy both through PDS and to State Governments? If not, why?

SHRI BUTA SINGH: Sir, as the country is aware, the House is also aware of the information as a whole. We have Five Year Plans and whatever the welfare schemes or the poor people schemes are announced in the Five Year Plans, I can go on record that Congress (I) has never misused any of such schemes for election purposes. We stand committed to the aims and targets that are fixed in the Five Year Plans. Sir, there are 23 programmes which are part of the Five Year Plan. Therefore, it is wrong to say that the Congress (I) has been indulging in such practices. It has come to our notice that certain political parties have made it a point to pick up one or two popular things and include them in their election manifestos. We do not criticise them. We wish them well. But they should foot the Bill also. (*Interruptions*).

SHRI S. JAIPAL REDDY: Does it mean... (*Interruptions*).

MR. CHAIRMAN: Mr. Reddy, have anything to aks following from your first question? (*Interruptions*).

SHRI S. JAIPAL REDDY: From the tone and tenor of the reply given by the hon. Minister, it appears that the Government of India is adopting a negative attitude. (*Interruptions*) Is it proper for the Government of India to adopt a negative attitude? (*Interruptions*)

MR. CHAIRMAN: Question No. 463.

Suoth Asian Preferential Trading Agreement

*463. SHRI SURESH PACHOURI : Will the Minister of COMMERCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that Nepal has extended its unconditional support to South Asian Preferential Trading Agreement (SAPTA);

(b) which other SAARC cuntries have so far supported the SAPTA;

(c) the impediments, if any, in the implementation of SAPTA;

(d) whether Government have taken any steps for the removal of the impediments coming in the way of SAPTA with other SAARC countries; and

(e) if so, the details thereof? ...